

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser

September 15, 2011

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you. I am going to keep my opening remarks very brief, because I want to have a conversation with you more than anything else. And so, my first task is just to thank Elizabeth, her wonderful children, for hosting us here. It is true that I have been here before. I think the first time I was here, I had just been elected to the Senate, and I still remember Smith and you being incredibly gracious to me and opening up your home at a time when I was still the new kid on the block. *[Laughter]* So I appreciate that, and I thank you for your extraordinary public service as well.

I want to thank all of you for being here. Many of you are old friends and have been supporters for a long time. Some of you are new, and I'm very grateful for you taking the time to be here.

As Elizabeth described aptly, we are going through extraordinary times. These are no ordinary times. We are going through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. And historically, after financial recessions, it is a challenge and a struggle. And over the last 2½ years, what we've been able to do is stabilize an economy, but at a level where unemployment remains way too high.

And so last week, I went before Congress, and I explained to them why they need to act—to put construction workers back to work and teachers back in the classroom and veterans back to work and dealing with the long-term unemployed—and tried to communicate a sense of urgency. The country does not have patience for the traditional political games here in Washington. Those games are okay when unemployment is at 5 percent and, basically, people can choose to ignore it. But right now, they need action. And certainly what they don't need is to make sure that Washington is an impediment to economic growth and putting people back to work.

As Elizabeth said, this particular Congress has not shown itself particularly eager to work with me to solve problems. I think that's—*[laughter]*—that's a fair assessment. *[Laughter]* But the American people, that's what they're demanding, that's what they're insisting on. And so we are going to be, over the next several weeks and next several months, out there talking very specifically about how Washington could make a difference right now.

Of course, I didn't run for the Presidency just to deal with immediate concerns. There are a wide range of problems that existed long before this particular recession hit. We still have an education system that is not training our kids for the 21st century and the demands of a global economy. We still are suffering from a lack of an energy policy that can deal both with our environmental challenges, but also our economic challenges.

Our health care bill, I think, is going to make a huge difference, providing 30 million people affordable coverage for the first time. But it's got to be implemented, and it's only part of the way there. We still have enormous inequality in our society and providing the ladders of opportunity for people who want to live out that American Dream, but are finding too many roadblocks along the way.

We still have a fiscal situation that arises not only from this most recent crisis, but also some long-term trends, where those of us in this room do very well, while folks who are

struggling don't do quite as well. And there's, I think, an innate sense among the American people that things aren't fair, that the deck is stacked against them, that no matter how hard they work, their costs keep on going up, their hours are longer, they're struggling to make their mortgage, and somehow nobody's paying attention.

And all those long-term trends—our structural deficit, energy policy, education—2012 is going to offer a clearer contrast than I think we've ever seen before; 2008 was a big election—obviously, I thought so, because—[*laughter*]. But in some ways 2012, I think, is going to be more clarifying, because if you see the direction that the Republican Party is now going in, you have a party that offers a fundamentally different vision of where America should be and what we should be aspiring to and what our core values are. And that contest is going to, I think, help shape America for not just the next 5 years, but for decades to come. And that's why your involvement and your engagement is going to be absolutely critical.

Now, I know that over the last couple of months there have been Democrats who voiced concerns and nervousness about, well, in this kind of economy, isn't this just—aren't these just huge headwinds in terms of your reelection? And I just have to remind people that—here's one thing I know for certain: The odds of me being reelected are much higher than the odds of me being elected in the first place. [*Laughter*] And in that spirit, I just want to point out, it was somebody during the photo line who—I think right here—made what I think is a very important wish. And that is that my next inauguration is warmer than the last one. [*Laughter*]

But we remain very confident about our ability to win a contest of ideas in 2012, as long as we can get the message out. Now, the campaign has not begun. My job—I've got a day job, and I'm going to have to spend a lot of time continuing to govern over the next several months. And that's why your voices, you being out there talking about the "American Jobs Act," talking about our track record in terms of what we've done over the last 3 years, talking to people about what's at stake, is going to be so important.

Elizabeth has done an extraordinary job in the past representing the United States. Well, this is one of those times where all of you are going to have to be my ambassadors over the next several months to make sure that people who I think continue to believe in change and continue to believe in hope are mobilized effectively in 2012. And if you're there with me, then I'm confident that we'll have an inauguration, although I can't promise good weather. [*Laughter*]

All right. Thank you very much, everybody. And then I think we're going to move the press out, and then we'll have a conversation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:54 p.m. at the residence of Elizabeth F. Bagley. In his remarks, he referred to Vaughan E. Bagley, daughter, and Conor R. Bagley, son, of Elizabeth F. Bagley. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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Names: Bagley, Conor R.; Bagley, Elizabeth F.; Bagley, Vaughan E.

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Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Standards and school accountability; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Energy : National energy policy; Health and medical care : Affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

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